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RHMFISS/CJTF HOA IMMEDIATE
RUZEFAA/CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 002419

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E AND A/S CARSON

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [EAID](#) [PTER](#) [SO](#)

SUBJECT: SOMALIA - NEW SOMALILAND NATIONAL ELECTORAL
COMMISSION APPEARS COHESIVE AND DETERMINED

Classified By: Political Counselor Bob Patterson, reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) Summary: During November 25 meetings in Addis Ababa with the Nairobi-based Democratic Steering Committee (DSC) the new Somaliland National Electoral Commission (NEC) appeared united and eager to move forward on the election process. The NEC agreed to the terms of reference for an international team of experts, set to begin work in Somaliland within weeks, and received statements of support from Somaliland political party representatives. In addition, Somaliland President Riyale made amends with the NGO Interpeace, a move that will allow for the continuity of technical election expertise. We think the political parties will almost certainly seek to manipulate the election process as it moves forward. We are, however, encouraged by the emergence of a cohesive NEC that may be better able than its predecessor to stand up to the political pressures to come. End Summary.

¶2. (C) During November 25 meetings in Addis Ababa with the Nairobi-based Democratic Steering Committee (DSC) the recently-appointed Somaliland National Electoral Commission (NEC) appeared united and eager to move forward on the long-stalled presidential election process. (Note: The meetings between the NEC and the DSC occurred in the middle of a five-day technical training. The DSC delegation was comprised of EC and US officials and the UN SRSG's deputy. End note.) Unlike the previous NEC, the commissioners spoke with one voice and appeared to respect their new chairman.

¶3. (C) NEC members said they were eager to move forward and were facing a great deal of public pressure to hold elections as soon as possible. The NEC agreed to the TORs for an international team of experts, set to arrive in Somaliland within a few weeks. (Note: The team of experts was called for in a six-point agreement between Somaliland's political parties and will work with the NEC to make recommendations for the election process and timeline.) NEC members said they plan to set up a committee of representatives from the NEC and the political parties to diminish distrust and ensure that the parties understand the technical steps the NEC is taking. The NEC Chairman asked donors to ensure the NEC's independence by working exclusively with the NEC on technical matters rather than engaging with the political parties. The NEC expressed appreciation for the technical training it was receiving and asked for additional assistance in employing staff.

¶4. (C) During a joint meeting with the NEC, representatives of all Somaliland's political parties made statements of support for the new NEC and assured the DSC they were committed to elections. The representative from Riyale's UDUB

party said he was glad the government had reconciled with the NGO Interpeace, a move that will allow for continuity of technical expertise. (Note: Riyale reportedly reached the agreement with Interpeace after Interpeace made a public statement acknowledging past mis-steps, promised not to hold direct conversations with the parties, and pledged it would limit its involvement to provision of technical expertise. End note.) The political parties also agreed to TORs for the panel of experts. All parties said the elections needed to take place without delay, with the opposition parties predictably stressing the importance of the timeline.

15. (C) In a separate meeting, Ethiopian State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tekeda Alemu told the DSC that Ethiopia wanted greater cooperation between the DSC and Addis Ababa. He said he hoped the November 25 meeting would be the beginning of closer collaboration. Tekeda described Riyale's reconciliation with Interpeace as "major progress" and said that Ethiopia wanted to engage with Somaliland in all areas short of recognition. Tekeda worried, however, that Somaliland politicians, in the interest of votes, will be weak on extremists in Somaliland. Tekeda said a stable and secure Somaliland is in Ethiopia's interest and, as such, Ethiopia will do "whatever it takes" to ensure Somaliland's stability.

16. (C) Comment: We think that the political parties will almost certainly seek to influence the next steps in preparing for the long-delayed elections. However, we are encouraged to see a cohesive and strong NEC that may be better able than its predecessor to stand up to the political

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pressures to come.
RANNEBERGER